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~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~ PARAMARIBO 03652

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL

SUBJECT: SURINAME: NEW DEVELOPMENTS1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SURINAME'S SUPREME ADVISORY COUNCIL (TOPBERAAD) MET IN EMERGENCY SESSION DECEMBER 8 TO HEAR THAT THE COUNTRY WAS ABOUT TO BE INVADED. ASKED WHAT MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN, PARTY LEADERS PROPOSED AND BOUTERSE AGREED TO ANNOUNCE TODAY, DECEMBER 9, A SPECIFIC TIMETABLE FOR THE VARIOUS STAGES OF DEMOCRATIZATION. VHP (HINDUSTANI PARTY) LEADER LACHMON GAVE THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING TO A CLOSE FRIEND, WHO PASSED IT ALONG TO US.

3. ACCORDING TO LACHMON'S ACCOUNT, BOUTERSE LOOKED DRAWN, TENSE AND TIRED. HE SAID THAT ACCORDING TO GOOD INFORMATION A "FOREIGN COUNTRY" WOULD SHORTLY INVADE SURINAME, POSSIBLY IN REACTION TO REPORTS OF BUSH NEGRO KILLINGS IN EASTERN SURINAME. HE DID NOT IDENTIFY THE COUNTRY BUT HINTED THAT IT WAS FRANCE, AIDED BY A "BIG POWER". HE ASKED WHAT THE COUNCIL MEMBERS THOUGHT SHOULD BE DONE.

4. AFTER CAUCUSING, THE PARTY LEADERS, SPEAKING THROUGH LACHMON, REPORTEDLY REMINDED BOUTERSE THAT THEY HAD URGED HIM SEVERAL MONTHS AGO TO ANNOUNCE AND COMMIT HIMSELF TO A SPECIFIC FORM OF AND TIMETABLE FOR THE NEW DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. IF HE DID SO NOW AND PUBLICIZED IT, THAT MIGHT STAVE OFF THE INVASION. BOUTERSE REPORTEDLY AGREED, AND A COMMUNIQUE IS TO BE ISSUED DECEMBER 9.

5. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, THE STATEMENT HAS THE CONSTITUTION BEING DRAFTED BY NEXT MARCH 31 AND PUT TO A REFERENDUM 6 MONTHS LATER. ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN 1988.

6. THE DUTCH AMBASSADOR, WITH WHOM WE MET THIS MORNING, HAS HEARD THAT THE TOPBERAAD ALSO CONSIDERED EXTENDING THE PRESENT STATE OF EMERGENCY TO PARAMARIBO AND THE REST OF SURINAME, BUT THAT WAS NOT CONTAINED

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IN THE ACCOUNT PRESENTED TO US. AMBASSADOR VAN HOUTEN HAS ALSO HEARD RUMORS OF PREPARATIONS FOR LARGE-SCALE ARRESTS IN PARAMARIBO OF BUSINESS AND POLITICAL LEADERS, INCLUDING SOME PRESENT CABINET MEMBERS, BUT THIS MAY BE MORE A SYMBOL OF TODAY'S STATE OF MIND IN THIS COUNTRY THAN ACTUAL INTENTIONS. DECEMBER 8 IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1982 KILLINGS.

7. COMMENT: BOUTERSE MAY HAVE GOTTEN WIND OF THE U.S. MARINES' PRESENCE IN FRENCH GUIANA AND COULD BE INTERPRETING IT IN THE LIGHT OF HIS OWN FEARS AND SUSPICIONS. IF SO, HE HAS BEEN BROODING OVER IT AT LEAST SINCE NOVEMBER 29, WHEN THE FOREIGN MINISTER ASKED THE AMBASSADOR ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE U.S. WAS PLANNING TO INVADE SURINAME. IN THE DECEMBER 8 MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER REPORTED SEPARATELY, THE QUESTION DID NOT AGAIN COME UP, AND THE AMBASSADOR DID NOT VOLUNTEER ANYTHING. CONSEQUENTLY, IF BOUTERSE IS REALLY WORRIED, AS LACHMON REPORTEDLY INFERRED FROM HIS APPEARANCE, HIS BOWING TO PRESSURE MIGHT BE ONLY ONE REACTION. ANOTHER COULD BE A LASHING OUT AT HIS "ENEMIES" AS HAPPENED BEFORE, AND THIS IS A DISQUIETING POSSIBILITY.

8. IN ANY CASE, BOUTERSE HAS NOT GIVEN UP ANYTHING. UNLESS THE COMMUNIQUE YIELDS TO THE PARTIES ALL THEY WANTED, HE WILL IN FACT HAVE GAINED SIX MONTHS FOR A CONSTITUTION WHOSE TERMS ARE STILL UNKNOWN AND 18 MONTHS FOR UNDEFINED ELECTIONS FOR UNKNOWN INSTITUTIONS. WE THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE HERE WILL SEE THE COMMUNIQUE AS WHAT IT IS -- A DEVICE TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM THE ATROCITIES IN EASTERN SURINAME AND FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESSING PREDICAMENT. BARBOUR
END OF MESSAGE
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